



DECEMBER 14, 2017

South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs
South Dakota Department of the Military



SDDVA RECEIVES BLANKETS AND HOODIES FOR HOMELESS VETERANS

***Santa Delivers
Packages to
SDDVA for
Homeless
Veterans***



The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs received 26 boxes of hooded sweatshirts and polar fleece blankets/pillows this week from *Coaches and Friends for the Military* (CFM).

CFM is based out of Texas and normally assists homeless veterans in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. CFM's CEO has been hunting in South Dakota numerous times and was very impressed with how friendly and caring South Dakotans were, and so he wanted to direct their outreach efforts to South Dakota.

CFM has asked SDDVA and their partners to provide the 144 sweat shirts and 180 blankets to homeless veterans in South Dakota. SDDVA will be working with shelters to ensure they get into the right hands.

Inside this issue:

Hamlin County Dons the RED	2
VA's Modernization Efforts	2
Veterans Artwork Competition	3
VA Decision Ready Claims Expands	3
Veterans Holiday Relief Drive	4
Gene Mapping	5
935th to Deploy to Middle East	5
Holiday Wreath Laying Ceremony	6
VA Mayor's Challenge	6
Upcoming Events	7

HAMLIN COUNTY DONS THE RED

A big SHOUT OUT to Hamlin county employees for donning the red in support of South Dakota Army National Guard's 200th Engineer Company Bridge Training Team currently deployed to the Middle East.

R.E.D. (Remember Everyone Deployed) gives us a chance to honor and remember all of our heroes who are deployed.



REOPENING OF LAFAYETTE BUILDING IN DC HIGHLIGHTS VA'S MODERNIZATION EFFORTS

Underscoring a key milestone in the VA's efforts to modernize its infrastructure, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) marked the reopening of its newly renovated Lafayette Building at 811 Vermont Ave., in Washington, D.C., with a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the facility Dec. 11. The 11-year renovation project consolidates the VA's footprint from four buildings into one energy-efficient space; eliminates two leases; and results in a cost avoidance of more than \$10 million in rent.

"In addition to providing a collaborative workplace, we have created a sustainable building that promotes energy conservation and employee wellness," said VA Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin. "It represents an excellent example of 'green building' and 'green development' that lends itself to the current and future needs of the VA.

As part of this strategic collaboration with the U.S. General Services Administration, and Export-Import Bank of the United States, the VA invested \$14 million to replace the building's outdated systems, refurbish the exterior façade and windows, and modernize the office spaces. Nearly 1,200 employees from VA's Veterans Health Administration and Office of Information and Technology have relocated to the first seven floors of the building.

The majority of funding for the renovation came from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The project is a hallmark for government workplace modernization. It abounds with energy efficiencies, to include daylight sensors, a rain-harvesting system, a solar-paneled roof and a cybercafé.

VETERANS ARTWORK SOUGHT FOR CREATIVE ARTS COMPETITION

The Sioux Falls VA Health Care System is inviting area veterans who want to share their creativity to enter visual art, including woodworking, painting, leatherwork, needlework, paper crafts, sculpture and more for the local Veterans Creative Arts Festival.

Veterans who receive care from the Sioux Falls VA Medical Center or one of its five outpatient clinics are eligible to participate and may enter up to two pieces. The pieces must have been created within the last year and be submitted no later than January 12, 2018.

Entries will be available for the public's viewing January 25, 2018, from 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM on second floor of the Primary Care addition of the Sioux Falls VA Medical Center. Judges from the local community will name winners, and a reception and awards ceremony will take place at 2:00 PM. Veteran artists will have the opportunity to enter the National Veterans Creative Arts competition, which will take place in Des Moines, IA from October 28-November 5, 2018.

Employees will also display their arts and crafts during the show but will not compete with veterans.

For more information about submitting artwork, contact Shirley Redmond at 605-333-6889 or Diane Larsen at 605-336-3230, Ext. 9-6418.

VA DECISION READY CLAIMS PROGRAM EXPANDS TO INCLUDE MORE TYPES OF CLAIMS

As part of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) ongoing efforts to modernize and improve veterans' experience with the disability claims process, the VA unveiled its latest enhancements to the Decision Ready Claims (DRC) program, which will expand the pool of veterans, surviving spouses, and service members eligible to participate in the program.

In addition to claims for increased disability compensation (commonly known as claims for increase), veterans will now be able to file certain claims for direct service connection, presumptive service connection and secondary service connection. Additionally, surviving spouses will be able to file certain claims for dependency and indemnity com-

pensation, and transitioning service members will be able to file pre-discharge claims less than 90 days from leaving the military. Veterans who choose to submit their claim under DRC can expect to receive a decision within 30 days from the time the VA receives the claim.

To file under DRC, veterans must work with an accredited representative, who will ensure all supporting evidence — such as medical exams, military service records, etc. — is included with the claim submission. This advance preparation by the VSOs allows claims to be assigned immediately to claims processors for a quick decision.

In the future, the VA aims to expand the DRC program, where possible, to ensure more veterans can get faster decisions on their claims. For more information about DRC or to find an accredited VSO representative, visit <https://www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/DRC.asp>.





Veterans' Holiday Relief Drive

Benefiting homeless and at-risk Veterans and Military Families



Hosted by the

Department of South Dakota
American Legion Auxiliary

Welcoming Buddy Baskets and Buddy Bags

Buddy Basket Home-Warming Welcome Recipe: Assemble a Laundry Basket/Waste Basket filled with: Paper Towels, Laundry Detergent, Household Cleansers, Rubber Gloves, Cleaning Sponges, Dust Pan w/Hand Brush, Light Bulbs, Flashlight, Batteries, Alarm Clock, Shower Curtain w/Rings, Bath Towel Set, Bathroom Tissue, Dishes, Eating Utensils, Dish Soap; Dish Towel Set - *Frosted with clear wrap, bow, and greeting tag*

Buddy Bag Thank A Hero Recipe: Assemble a Bag filled with: Personal Hygiene Products, Hand Towel Set, Shower Shoes or Slippers, Socks, Hat, Scarf and Gloves; Shopping or Salon Gift Card - *Sealed with a note or card of appreciation*

Substitute, Homemade or Single Essential Items Welcome:

Sleeping Bags, Bedding, Warm Apparel, Small Appliances, Thermos, Bottled Water, Sun Screen, Lip Balm, Bus Pass; Pre-Paid Phone/Card

Monetary Donations: Checks payable and mailed to:

Dept. of SD American Legion Auxiliary, Attn: VHRD - 129 North Main Avenue • Hartford, SD 57033

SD Drop-Off Locations - Through January 31, 2018

Aberdeen: Area Chamber of Commerce • 516 S Main Street
Sioux Falls: American Legion Post 15 • 1701 W Legion Drive
Vermillion: The Broadcaster/Plain Talk • 201 W Cherry Street
Yankton: Yankton Elks Lodge #994 • 504 W 27th Street
Mitchell: American Legion Post 18 • 107 N Main Street
Hot Springs: American Legion Post 71 • 1045 Jennings Avenue

Rapid City: Cornerstone Rescue Mission • 30 Main Street (Earmark Donation • VHRD - Vets Wing)
Spearfish: Area Chamber of Commerce • 106 W Kansas Street; Black Hills Pioneer • 315 Seaton Circle

For Additional SD Drop-Off Locations/Information Contact:

Autumn Simunek via VeteransHRD@gmail.com, call 605.890.3093 or visit SDLegionaux.org



Thank you for contributing to
South Dakota's Veteran Outreach Programs!
Serving Veterans, their Families and their Communities



VETERANS SOUGHT FOR GENE-MAPPING PROJECT

Veterans can now participate in a landmark gene-mapping project at the Sioux Falls VA Medical Center.

The Million Veteran Program is collecting blood and information from veterans across the country for research into illnesses that could lead to breakthroughs in treatment and cures. Researchers plan to use the samples to study diseases such as diabetes, cancer, and military-related illnesses like post traumatic stress.

The Sioux Falls U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center recently became one of the 65 locations in the United States where veterans enrolled in the VA Health Care System may have a blood sample taken for this project. To date, approximately 600,000 veterans have enrolled, but this is the first chance in our region to be involved in the research project.

Veterans may stop by and visit with Jessica Wittrock, MVP Research Coordinator, in Room A53 (by radiology) at the medical center any week-day from 8:30 AM-3:30 PM. Questions about MVP, visit www.research.va.gov/mvp or call 866-441-6075.



RAPID CITY NATIONAL GUARD UNIT TO DEPLOY TO MIDDLE EAST

A 28-member unit from the South Dakota Army National Guard has received an official mobilization order for deployment to the Middle East beginning in June 2018.

The Rapid City-based Detachment 1, Company B, 935th Aviation Support Battalion is scheduled for a nine-month deployment where they will provide aviation maintenance and repair support for U.S. Army rotary aircraft and avionics systems.

The unit will report to Fort Hood, Texas, to complete several weeks of theater-specific training prior to deployment overseas.

This will be the second mobilization for the unit, which deployed to the Middle East in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in 2012-2013.

HOLIDAY WREATH-LAYING TO HONOR VETERANS

Black Hills National Cemetery will host *Wreaths Across America*, two holiday wreath-laying ceremonies to honor and remember our nation's veterans. The local Knights of Columbus, veterans service organizations and citizens are coordinating the event to honor veterans of each branch of the military, the Merchant Marines as well as Prisoners of War and those still Missing in Action.

The BHNC event will be held at 10:00 am (MT) Saturday, December 16, 2017, at the Black Hills National Cemetery (20901 Pleasant Valley Drive) in Sturgis.

Hot Springs National Cemetery will host *Wreaths Across America*, a holiday wreath-laying ceremony Saturday, December 16, 2017, at 10:00 am (MT). The Crazy Horse Civil Air Patrol, veterans service organizations and citizens are coordinating the event to honor our heroes. The ceremony will be held at the Hot Springs National Cemetery (500 N. 5th Street) in Hot Springs.

AIMED AT PREVENTING SUICIDES, VA INVITES 7 CITIES TO PARTICIPATE IN MAYOR'S CHALLENGE

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the United States Department of Health and Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) announced the inaugural Mayor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide among service members, veterans and their families.

The goal of the Mayor's Challenge is to eliminate suicide by using a comprehensive public health approach to suicide prevention.

VA and SAMHSA will invite seven cities to participate in a policy academy process that up until now has been available only to states and territories. The cities will be invited based on veteran population data, suicide prevalence rates and capacity of the city to lead the way in this first phase of the Mayor's Challenge. The selected cities will be announced mid-December, once they have formally accepted nominations.

Teams from each of the seven cities will meet March 14-16, 2018, in Washington, D.C., to develop strategic action plans to implement in their communities. The teams will include collaborative groups of community, municipal, military, and other stakeholders. The VA will provide technical assistance to support local efforts and to document outcomes and share strategies with other municipalities.

Cities interested in learning more about the Mayor's Challenge, can submit a request for information form at <https://pra.typeform.com/to/C2Zv2B>.

Veterans in crisis or having thoughts of suicide — and those who know a veteran in crisis — should call the Veterans Crisis Line for confidential support 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and 365 days a year. Call 800-273-8255 and press 1, chat online at VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat, or text to 838255.

Upcoming Events

Dec 16—Wreaths Across America Ceremony—Black Hills National Cemetery (20901 Pleasant Valley Drive—Sturgis) - 10:00 am (MT)
Dec 16—Wreaths Across America Ceremony—Hot Springs National Cemetery (500 N. 5th Street— Hot Springs) - 10:00 am (MT)
Dec 18-19—SDDVA Staff in training
December 25-26—State Offices Closed

2018

Jan 1—State Offices Closed
Jan 9—Governor's State of the State Address—1:00 pm (CT)
Jan 10—SD Veterans Commission Meeting—RedRossa in Pierre—9:00 am (CT)
Jan 10—SDDVA/Veterans Council Legislative Reception—RedRossa in Pierre—5:00—8:00 pm (CT)
Jan 18—SD American Legion Legislative Reception—Post 8—Pierre—5:00 pm (CT)
Jan 28-29—VFW Legislative Conference—Ft. Pierre AmericInn
Jan 29—VFW Legislative Reception—AmericInn—Ft. Pierre—6:00 pm—7:30 pm (CT)
Feb 16-18 American Legion Mid Winter Conference—Oacoma
Feb 23-25 Vietnam Veterans & Era Reunion—Ramada Inn—Mitchell
Mar 4-8 National VFW Conference—Washington, DC
Apr 27-29—DAV State Convention—The Lodge—Deadwood
Jun 7-10—American Legion State Convention—Spearfish
Jun 14-17—VFW State Convention—Sioux Falls
Jul 14-17—DAV National Convention—Reno, NV
Aug 20-24—SDDVA Benefits School—Ramkota—Pierre
Aug 20-24—American Legion National Convention—Minneapolis, MN

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